[For information pertaining to the Bahrain pearl fishing industry, and its regulation by the government, see 1: Bowen, MK2 Maritime Arabs, category 116.]

131 length and a mile wide. "Howar" means "Young Camel" and the island was so called because it is similar in shape though smaller than Bahrain, and so was described as its offspring.

There are many other little islands in the Bahrain archipelago ; some contain small villages or fishermen's huts while others are deserted except during the occasional visits of migratory birds or pearl divers who come to the islands during the diving season to draw water from the freshwater springs.

311 Along the northern coast of Bahrain there is a narrow strip of land
137 some three miles wide which is under cultivation. The fertile gardens containing date and loz (Indian almond or Terminalia) pomegranate, banana and fig trees are irrigated from many natural springs and artesian wells. But in the waterless areas south of the cultivation, in the centre of the island, only sparse and hardy desert flora exists. Although this desert may seem bare to the eyes of a visitor accustomed to the lush greenness of Europe or the States, it is in fact covered with a great variety of desert plants which were found, in a recent survey, to include some 200 species.

133 Beyond the cultivated area the land is barren and the landscape consists of low rolling hills with numerous rocky cliffs and dry wadis. Most of the Islands of Bahrain are surfaced with hard limestone rock, covered in many places with sand dunes, and, in the case of the main island, with pre-historic tumuli. From the shore line the topography rises gradually towards the centre where it again drops off into a basin surrounded by steep cliffs. Towards the centre of the basin there is a very pronounced rocky promontory known as "Jebal ad-Dukhan," the "Mountain of Smoke," a name given to it because of the vague and hazy appearance it often presents, particularly during the hot summer months. The Jebal is only 450 feet above sea level and 250 feet above the surrounding plain but often, when mist surrounds its base, it gives the impression of being a considerable mountain.

Although Bahrain is a small country yet it displays a very varied
226 landscape and many surprising contrasts between old and new. It
228 is primarily a sea faring state. The brilliant blue and green waters, studded with white sails, which surround the islands provide the people of Bahrain with fish, which they catch from boats and in traps, fresh water, from the submarine springs, coral stone for building and pearls which made Bahrain such an important trading centre in the past.
361 The coastal towns have an attractive appearance. Manama's water front is lined with high white houses and beyond the town date gardens extend in an unbroken line down to the water's edge. Roads in the northern part of Bahrain pass through avenues of tall and stately date palms, bearing great bunches of golden, red and yellow fruit during
133 the summer months. The south of the island is a miniature desert and in the foothills around the Jebal there are many little wadis which
ooo after the rainy season are bright with desert flowers and shrubs. Even

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A small diving boat. *Photo : Sir Charles Belgrave.*

228

A fully equipped diver. On the ground are the ropes and the weight, on his fingers are leather guards, a bag is round his neck and a clip on his nose.
*Photo : Sir Charles Belgrave.*

A diver's bag and the hauler. *Photo : Sir Charles Belgrave.*

464 Europeans. For the latter the company provides many amenities. 382 In the town of Awali there is a cinema, a club and other recreational facilities. There is a Commissary for the supply of foods and goods 511 unobtainable elsewhere in Bahrain; a school for American and Euro- 466 pean children with qualified teachers and hospitals for the various nationalities employed by BAPCO. A cinema, swimming bath and mosque are also being constructed in the Arab Camp, and a swimming bath and cinema in the Indian and Pakistani camp at Rifaa. The company also maintains dispensaries in some of the villages and has built three schools for the Bahrain Government. There is cordial co-operation between the Bahrain Government and BAPCO in all fields of social service and although it may seem strange that an oil company should be encouraged to occupy itself with so many activities not directly connected with the production of oil, yet it is now recognised in the Middle East that it is an obligation of oil companies not only to work for their shareholders but also for the benefit of the people of the country from which they derive their profits.

471 In 1940 a Supplementary Agreement was signed between the Ruler 382 and the Bahrain Petroleum Company in which the latter received an extension to its concession including all lands, shoals, reefs, waters and submerged lands of "the present and future domains" of the Ruler of Bahrain.

315 It is a comparatively rare thing for people visiting Bahrain to see the actual oil which has made the Islands famous, gone are the days when to "strike oil" meant that a huge gusher of oil would leap skywards covering everything about it with what is termed, in the hackneyed phrase of the journalist, "black gold." Today the drilling of a well is normally a tidy process ; when oil is struck the drillers have complete control over its flow and quickly cap the well with a "Christmas Tree," the nickname for the mass of taps and valves which are placed over the well head. From the well the oil is piped to the Refinery and then to the storage tanks at Sitra. But in every part of its processing little is seen of the oil except by the workers in the laboratories.

433 The oil industry today is the most important factor in Bahrain's economy and is recognised as such by the Government and the people of the country.

## CHAPTER VI

## JEWELS OF THE DEEP

●228 Pearl diving is probably the oldest industry in Bahrain and has been the reason why an otherwise small and comparatively unproductive group of islands has been the scene of so many bitter wars and has been over-run by so many invading armies. From earliest times Bahrain has been famous for its pearls ; in an Assyrian inscription of some 2000 B.C. a parcel of "fish eyes" from Dilmun is believed to be

the first reference to the pearls of Bahrain. Tylos, the classical name for Bahrain, was stated by Pliny to be "famous for the vast number of its pearls." In more recent years the merchant Suliman, an Arab traveller of the 9th century, mentions the pearl fisheries of Bahrain, while in the 10th century we have the first description of the actual methods of diving left by a certain Abu Zaid Hassan. From an examination of his description it can be seen how little the methods of diving have changed during the past 1000 years.

228 ● 113

Many later travellers and geographers have been interested by the pearl fisheries ; the famous geographer Idrisi, after mentioning the political state of affairs describes the method of diving ; Bakri in 1273, Abu'l Fida in the early 14th century and Ibn Batuta all mention the pearl fisheries. In 1485 Duarte Barbosa, a Portuguese explorer, says of Barem (Bahrain) "Around it grows much seed pearl, also large pearls of good quality. The merchants of the island itself fish for these pearls, and have therefrom great profits."

At the turn of the 16th century the Portuguese had firmly established themselves in India and were expanding into the Persian Gulf. In 1514 Don Albuquerque, Governor of India, visited Bahrain and noted with envy its pearl fisheries, which he said were superior to those elsewhere in the Gulf, and on his return to Hormuz, in the following year, he ordered from Bahrain many pearls which were required by the King of Portugal for the "pontifical of Our Lady." It is probable that the subsequent seizure of Bahrain by the Portuguse in 1522 was due to the wealth of the pearl traders, for the Portuguese were firm believers in monopolies and wanted to ensure their complete control over the pearl industry. This is confirmed by a Dutch traveller who said, in 1598, that "The King of Portugal hath also his factor in Bahrain, that stayeth there only for the fishing of pearls."

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In the 17th and 18th centuries the pearl fisheries became better known to Europeans, and also to Arabs, for it was the presence of the pearl fisheries of Bahrain that attracted the al-Khalifah from Kuwait, first to Zubara and then, after their victory over the Persians, to Bahrain. Although in the 19th century the British became politically supreme in the Persian Gulf, they did not interfere in the pearl industry, but on the contrary they helped to preserve the rule that only the inhabitants of those countries bordering on the Gulf could fish on the pearl banks. Recent laws passed in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia forbidding the use of diving suits have also been aimed at giving all an equal chance to fish without the richer merchants gaining an unfair advantage by the use of mechanical equipment.

The origin of the pearl has fascinated many peoples, but it is surely the Arabs who have the most colourful stories about its origin. Shaikh Nabhani in his *Tarikh al-Jazirat al-Arabiya* quotes the following as being a local tradition, although he rejects it as baseless. "In the spring the pearl shells rise to the surface of the sea and when it rains or when there is a heavy dew the oyster swallows one or more drops of water which then turn into pearls." Nabhani does, however, believe the

228 story that Bahrain pearls are superior in colour to all others because of the presence in the seas around Bahrain of numerous fresh-water springs. In fact the real origin of the pearl inspires no romance, it is the process by which the pearl shell rids itself of an unwelcome intruder. The oyster, when opening to obtain food, often admits small particles of sand or some other substance which irritate its soft flesh, the shell therefore covers the intruder with a secretion that forms a smooth coat of nacre. Once this process has started it continues, more and more layers are built up until the process is stopped by the pearl being removed from its shell or when some accident happens to it. If a pearl is cut in half and examined under the microscope the layers of the nacre can clearly be seen.

221 228 The "Gaus al-Kabir" or main diving season takes place from June to early in October, but before and after the season there is the "Gaus al-Bard" or cold diving season, the duration of which is determined by weather conditions, but which is not recognised as the diving season *par excellence*. In former days the departure of the Bahrain fleet for the pearl banks was the occasion of great excitement, and with drums playing and small boys cheering the boats would sail away from Muharraq. After being joined by boats from other coastal towns and villages the fleet would proceed to the pearl banks, where each boat would choose its own anchorage and prepare for diving.

501 228 Formerly the boat built especially for pearl diving was the sambuq (see Chapter VII), but today the most usual boat is the jalibut, while many very small boats with crews of a dozen men go out to the banks. All pearlers are equipped with special oars with square blades, and on arriving at the banks these are tied so that they project over the water.

228 At each oar two ropes are thrown overboard, one attached to a stone or metal weight and the other to a net bag, although the bag is sometimes hung round the diver's neck. The divers then strip to the buff, or content themselves with a narrow loin cloth, they put on nose clips of bone or tortoise-shell and protect their fingers with leather guards. Putting their feet in a loop in the weighted rope, the divers are swiftly let down, each by his Saib or puller, who remains on deck holding the ropes with the careful hand of a fisherman, but more is at stake than a trout or a salmon, for if the Saib fails to hoist the diver to the surface directly he feels his pull on the rope, the diver's life is in danger. When the diver reaches the sea-bed the weighted rope is pulled up while the diver keeps hold on the second rope. While on the sea-bed the diver hacks off with a small knife as many pearl shells as he can, usually collecting about ten shells in the minute and a half he spends below the surface. When exhausted he tugs sharply at the rope and is hauled to the surface. Twelve fathoms is about the maximum depth to which he dives, and it is easy to picture the frantic rush at this depth to collect the necessary shells. On coming to the surface the diver hangs, resting on the weighted rope, while the Saib tips the bag of shells on to the deck. The rest periods vary with the weather. When it is cold the divers spend two thirds of the time resting on the deck of the

boat, sucking cigarettes or sipping bitter Arab coffee, but when the water is warmer a longer period is spent in the sea. Food is not eaten during the diving hours as it is considered bad for the diver's health. 228

The splash and swirl of the blue waters of the Gulf, often as smooth and clear as glass, the glistening bodies of the sun-burnt divers, the deep-throated chanting of the Saibs and the mounting piles of dark encrusted shells, are sights and sounds never to be forgotten. From time to time the cabin boy, who is found on each boat, collects the shells in sacks and piles them along the sides of the boat. As the sun sets the crew eat their light meal of dates, fish, bread and coffee and then sink down with pleasure into deep sleep along the decks. Then all that there is to disturb the silence of the night is the crackling of the fire burning on the portable mud hearth, the creaking of ropes and the splash caused by the line of the midnight fishermen catching to-morrow's meal.

Next morning the members of the crew are up early and gather around the heaps of shells which are more easily opened after having been left in the night-air, and with deft flicks of little curved knives they examine the oyster's meat so that not even the smallest seed pearl is missed. The despoiled shells are tossed aside, to be collected later and thrown back into the sea. As the pearls are found, their finders stick them between their toes until they have collected a number, which are then handed to the nakhuda or captain. The latter stores them in a great wooden chest, studded with brass nails after tying them in small squares of red cloth, that being the colour which is believed to show pearls to their best advantage. When all the shells have been opened the remains are thrown overboard, the decks swabbed down and the day's diving commences.

From time to time boats return to Bahrain to collect fresh provisions and for the medical treatment of the crew. Fresh water, surprisingly enough, is less of a problem, for near many of the pearl banks there are submarine fresh water springs, some of which have been controlled by pipes affixed by the Bahrain Government. The monotony of the diver's day is also broken by the visits of "Tawawish," pearl buyers, who come out in launches to the banks to offer ready cash for their purchases, and by visits of hospital and police launches from Bahrain. The end of the diving season, as well as the date of its commencement, is laid down by the annual proclamation of the Bahrain Government. [312] [437] [656]

Despite the tales of travellers, sharks and saw-fish are not a very great menace to divers, they are in fact a rarity and for many years no diver has been attacked by either fish. The blue jelly-fish is more feared than either, for with its long tentacles it can give a most unpleasant sting, and it is to combat it that in the jelly-fish season many divers wear a form of cotton combinations covering all parts of the body except hands and eyes. The detrimental effect of diving on the men's health is often exaggerated, and with the better diet and medical treatment the divers of today are a healthy set of men and compare favourably with workers in other industries. [136]

471 228 The financing of a pearl boat is a complicated affair. Formerly most boats were owned by their captains, but today the majority of the larger boats belong to land merchants. In cases where boats belong to captains but are financed by land merchants, the latter make a profit of about 10%, but in cases where the merchants both own and provision the boats they receive 20% of the profits. After deducting costs, the remainder of the profit is shared in fixed proportions, the nakhuda receiving five parts, the diver two and the Saib one.

437 228 When the nakhuda sells the catch he must always be accompanied by two members of the crew, to see fair play. Sales are carried out in an unusual way. If the nakhuda and the purchaser or broker do not want the audience to know the amounts offered for the pearls, and as the sales take place in the quarter of the pearl brokers there are always interested bystanders, they spread a cloth over their hands and bargain by a sort of deaf and dumb language. Once they have agreed on the price the nakhuda must obtain the consent of the two witnesses before the sale is considered valid. The value of the pearls is established in 804 a special way. In the case of ordinary pearls, they are collected in 435 great numbers, sorted for size by a set of graded sieves, and each group 228 is weighed and counted and their value in "chows," a form of measurement derived from the weight of the pearls, is discovered from a book printed for the purpose. Once a pearl or pearls have been assessed at so many chows, the question of the value per chow is settled by bargaining, the price per chow depending on the average shape, texture and colour in the case of bunches of pearls or in single pearls. In the case of pairs of pearls their value depends greatly on how well they are matched. Seed pearls, the smallest form of pearls, are sold entirely by weight, while a single pearl has been known to sell for as much as £15,000, as in the case of the Bahrain pearl which was eventually bought by a well known American lady.

228 433 It is very difficult to estimate the value of the Bahrain catch in past years, the figure for 1833 was estimated at £240,000, £400,000 in 1835 and £303,941 in 1896. In more recent years the Bahrain Government has given official figures which outline the history of the industry during the past quarter of a century. In 1833 it was also said that there were 1,500 boats leaving Bahrain annually for the pearl banks, and in 1896, 900. The largest number of Bahrain pearling boats has been given as 2,000 but this figure is probably an exaggeration. That the industry has declined is proved by the figures, in 1930, 509 boats manned by 19,300 men found pearls worth Rs. 2,125,000, while in 1948 there were only 83 boats with a crew of 2,000 and finding a catch worth Rs. 855,000. Although the numbers of boats and divers decreased by about 6 times and 9 times respectively it is noticeable that the catch only decreased in value by 2½ times and in 1950 the catch was worth Rs. 1,650,000, more than half of the 1930 figure.

228 178 433 The reason for the decline in the industry, which started in 1930, was the severe trade depression which began in that year and which reduced the wealth of those in Europe who were in the habit of buying

pearls, and also the large scale manufacture of cultured pearls in Japan. It was indeed lucky for Bahrain that oil was found in 1932, or else she would have seen her principal industry slowly decline with nothing with which to replace it. Once the oil industry was established, however, it in its turn served to precipitate the decay of the older industry by providing employment with better conditions and higher pay than were to be found on the pearl banks. The decline had also been unwittingly aided by the reforms of the late Ruler, Shaikh Hamed, who, on becoming Deputy Ruler in 1923, found the working conditions of the industry in a shocking state. The pearl banks were productive and much money was being made but little of it went to the divers, many of whom had involved themselves in a form of financial slavery to the nakhudas. Divers were given advances by the captains before the season, to provide for their families while they were away at sea, and at the end of the season, while the sales of the pearls, were being carried out. The eventual result was that the captains gave advances far in excess of the money due to the divers at the end of the season and to repay these loans the divers were forced to work for the same captain in the following season. But each year the advances were again in excess of the divers' earnings and so they got deeper and deeper into debt to the captains. At the same time the latter were indebted to shore merchants for supplies, for which they were charged high rates of interest, although this was contrary to the Sheria Law. The captains passed this interest on to the divers, who thus paid a minimum of 50% of their original debt each year. Diving debts were bequeathed, sons of divers whose fathers died owing money to captains were forced to work for them, and a diver, if he became too old to work, was only released from diving if he was replaced by his son or some other relation. In addition to this, indebted divers were often made to work on land for their creditors, or were handed over as workers to merchants to whom the nakhuda owed money.

Shaikh Hamed was determined to abolish all these practices and was supported by some of the more progressive Arabs and the Shiite and Sunni judges, who disapproved of the whole system. Amongst the bitterest opponents of the reforms were the divers themselves who were persuaded by the nakhudas and merchants into believing that they were going to lose by them. The reforms were, however, introduced and resulted in fixed advances, the amounts of which were announced annually by proclamation, the restriction of interest on advances, and all advances in excess of the legal amounts to be unreclaimable in court. The divers were also entitled to seek other work on the condition that they repaid a certain proportion of their diving debt each year. Many thousands of debts were reduced and the special diving court, which had favoured the captains and merchants, was abolished and all diving cases were heard by the ordinary courts. Finally, the debts of a diver died with him and could not be inherited by his heirs. The result of these reforms was that the industry, although reduced in size was put on a much sounder footing and its workers were not forced to dive but did so because they wanted to.

228 656 178 The Bahrain Government has tried hard to encourage the diving industry, by the remittance of the registration fees on diving boats, by customs concessions and by other means, but it is certain that the industry will never return to its palmy days when so many of the people of Bahrain were connected with it or depended on it.

228 431 609 Visitors to the pearl banks are advised to set out at about midnight from Bahrain. Launches can be hired in Manama or Muharraq and if they leave at twelve midnight, the banks will be reached at two or three in the morning. The remainder of the night can be spent lying at anchor and in the early morning the opening of the shells can be watched, followed by the preparations for the day's work and the actual diving. The divers have no objection to being photographed at their work and welcome foreigners on board their boats, they do, however, appreciate a present from visitors and it is a good plan to take out some fresh dates or other fruit, for the boats, particularly at the end of the season, are usually low in fresh provisions and such a gift is very welcome.

## CHAPTER VII

## LOCAL INDUSTRIES

### THE POTTERIES

323 [428] PEARLING is not the only ancient industry in Bahrain, for the presence in many parts of the islands of pottery sherds indicates that pottery has been made here for many centuries. Today this industry is restricted to the village of Aali whose inhabitants work in the same way as did their forefathers, scorning modern innovations.

[472] From the hills around Rifaa the clay is brought to Aali; brown and red clay for the coarser objects and white clay for finer work. The raw clay is beaten and then mixed with water until it is ready for throwing by the younger members of the potter's family, for each pottery is a separate family concern. All the processes which go into the making of pottery take place in small sheds, in each one a potter can be seen at work, his feet in a pit working the wheel which is on a level with his waist. Rapidly he flings lumps of clay on to the spinning wheel and with deft fingers works the shapeless mud into graceful jars, bowls and other utensils. When each piece is completed it is set in the sun to dry before being taken to the oven. Most of the ovens [172] are built in the prehistoric tumuli south of the village, which have been excavated. A hole is made in the roof of the tomb and another at the side; in the former the objects to be baked are placed and the latter is filled with firewood. When the fires are lit the tombs become miniature volcanoes with thick smoke belching from their peaks, slowly the fires die down, the smoke clears and the baked pottery is removed and the ovens are prepared for the next baking.

1; Belgrave F-3 (no date) 1953 MZ2 Bahrain MZ2

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The North Wall of the Portuguese Fort. *Photo : Sir Charles Belgrave.*

228

Divers at work. To the right a diver can be seen wearing a cotton garment as a protection against jelly-fish. *Photo : Sir Charles Belgrave.*

there is a deep depression surrounded by large blocks of stone which was once a great spring said to have irrigated much of north-western Bahrain. This spring, known as Ain Sejour, is traditionally associated with the name of the Caliph Abd al-Malik (685-705) who is reputed to have come to Bahrain with an army to chastise the people who had given refuge to politico-religious refugees from Iraq. According to local histories the Bahrainis worsted the invaders in a war by a clever use of the underground water channels and a truce was signed. Later the Caliph is said to have murdered the Bahraini leaders and to have filled in this well "to reduce the pride of the people of Bahrain," since then it has been dry and the land around it has reverted to desert. It seems unlikely that the Caliph himself came to Bahrain, he probably sent one of his generals and later tradition ascribed the leadership to the Caliph himself.

Several well-to-do families own houses in Diraz, and when pearling flourished its people were important nakhudas (captains) and pearl merchants. Many of the villagers are still divers and keep their boats on the shore near the little mosque north of Budaiya Garden. For use in these boats the villagers weave their own sail-cloth on local looms.

### JESRA

On the edge of the open plain about 4 miles south of Budaiya is Jesra, the point where the pipeline from Arabia crosses to Bahrain, here also is a village whose Arab inhabitants are mainly retainers of the Ruling Family. Several Shaikhs have also built substantial houses in the village, as well as gardens irrigated from artesian wells. Another road leads from Jesra to Rifaa al-Gharbi, following the route of the pipeline across the desert.

### MALAKIYA

Four miles south of Jesra the road, after passing through the villages of Karzakan and Dumistan, enters the little village of Malakiya, set in the centre of thriving date gardens, some of which belong to merchants in Manama. The only claim to interest in this village is a large tomb which is held in great veneration by the Shia community of Bahrain and is visited by pilgrims from all parts of the Islands. The tomb is of a certain Amir Zaid, but there is some difference of opinion about his identity. Some contend that he was Zaid bin Sohan, one of the Companions of the Prophet, but according to other local authorities he was a certain Amir Zaid bin Umaira al-Abdi who witnessed a covenant of truce made between the people of the Islands and al-Mua'lla bin al-Hadrami, the Moslem conqueror of Bahrain. A third version is that the worthy Amir was the leader of the people of Bahrain in a war that took place between them and the Caliph Abd al-Malik (See paragraph on Diraz). It has not yet been decided which of these versions is in fact the true one, but this does not deter Shia pilgrims from visiting Malakiya.

and deaths in Bahrain. In the distribution of sexes males predominated, the census figure showed 58,601 males and 51,049 females. If the number of Bahrain men who are working abroad were included in this figure the proportion of men would be very high. A reason for the heavy preponderance of males is that most of the people who have come to Bahrain to work during recent years did not bring their wives and families with them, this fact is particularly noticeable in the case of Indians, Hassawis, Persians and Omanis. If Indians and Europeans are deducted from the total number of males and 30% of the males are reckoned as being under 15 or over 65 years of age the total local man power available in Bahrain would be about 38,000.

## OCCUPATION

Details of occupation were difficult to obtain; in most cases the replies to questions were vague, men described themselves as "labourers" which included cultivators oil field workers and labourers employed by contractors and by the Government. A significant point was that nobody described himself as a diver though a few years ago half of the able bodied men in Bahrain would have given their occupation as divers. Now-a-days men dive during the season, in the summer, and have regular employment during the rest of the year. Generally it can be said that the cultivators who work in the gardens are always Shia Baharna and Hassawis, Arabs never work on the land in Bahrain, the village Baharna are also employed as fishermen, weavers, coral cutters and labourers in the oil fields. Few of them willingly take on work which keeps them away from their villages at night. The men of the Arab villages work in the oil fields and at sea. The townsfolk of Manamah, Muharraq and Hedd, who are of mixed nationalities, include merchants, shopkeepers, Government servants, mechanics and oil field workers and labourers.

## DIVING INDUSTRY

There is little to report on this subject. Under present conditions it seems probable that in a few years the diving Nakhudas will find that it is impossible to obtain any recruits for diving in Bahrain. During the season only 12 boats went out to the banks from Bahrain and most of the divers who were engaged were from Persia and the Trucial Coast. So much money can be earned on shore that few men are willing to leave their shore jobs in order to dive during the summer months.

The tax on imported pearls imposed by the Government of India was in force throughout and after the diving season and this contributed to a large extent to the slackness in the pearl trade. Taking into consideration the small number of boats employed in diving the catch was moderately good and pearl prices were not much lower than in the previous season.

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## MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

### 1372

(Report by Dr. R. H. B. Snow, M.B.E., Senior Medical Officer)

**Summary of the Year**

A change is gradually infiltrating and making itself evident in the scope and policy of medical work which is increasing in every department and subconsciously affecting the life of the Island. Traditions are now being established which the new generation are growing up with, and health ideas which once were revolutionary are now accepted as the normal course of reasonable upbringing.

The medical department which started in a small way, and expanded slowly is seeing results which are very satisfying but which are taken for granted, although they took years of striving to achieve. From its small beginnings and tiny nucleus of key staff it has now spread out from something rather personal to more of a departmental outlook. This in the course of things is bound to be, but its danger is that lack of co-ordination may develop or that the department may absorb the individual expression. At present there seems to be no signs of this because the various heads of departments meet together continually to exchange ideas and align themselves in a common policy, and also they are readily accessible to the public.

Lines of expansion have shown themselves everywhere. The surgical work has been given great impetus by the advent of an F.R.C.S. specialist, Mr. R. D. Wilkins.

The operation theatre now runs a staff rota for every 24 hours of the day, made possible by recruiting Sister Ford and Sister Johnson from England. Sister Edwards was appointed to the Nursing Home to replace Sister Millson. The X-Ray department has an English Radiographer in charge—Mr. Havey. The Laboratory has a staff of six technicians. Four new Indian doctors arrived, one lady doctor for the Women's Hospital, and the others, male, were appointed to the Boys' Schools, The Port, and the Hospital. Mr. Burgin replaced Mr. Hanvey as Public Health Inspector, and Mr. Nambiar became the new Anti-Malaria Supervisor. Both hospitals recruited many more Indian trained nurses. The lack of sufficient staff has now been made good and at present meets all needs which recently have been very pressing. It meant also that more specialised apparatus could be installed being safely handled by expert hands. Such things include a more powerful X-Ray plant, a modern anaesthetic apparatus to administer all gases and curare, an electro-cautery unit and an electro-cardiograph.

5: Bahrain G-5 (1926-1937) 1937 MZ2 Bahrain MZ2



MUHARRAQ MUNICIPALITY (*cont.*)

| | Revenue. Rs | | Expenditure. Rs |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1349 ... | 52,000/- | ... | 46,300/- |
| 1350 ... | 36,700/- | ... | 28,900 - |
| 1351 ... | 33,900/- | ... | 27,700/- |
| 1352 ... | 33,700/- | ... | 30,400 - |
| 1353 ... | 32,800/- | ... | 26,200/- |
| 1354 ... | 32,600/- | ... | 23,300 - |

The Manamah municipality, after the Customs Department, is the longest-established public department in Bahrain. In the beginning its authority extended in various directions beyond the normal functions of a municipality: it controlled the police and it had some influence over customs matters. Owing to this reason, the municipality in the past has at times assumed rights over matters which do not concern it, such as objecting to the import of vegetable ghee on the grounds that the public could be cheated by its adulteration with real ghee; but during recent years the council has confined its work to legitimate municipal affairs.

The municipalities are encouraged as much as possible to manage their own affairs; they are not dominated by the Government, but they are given advice when they require it. The municipal officers and past and present members of councils have a certain civic pride, and they and the public, especially in Manamah, are proud of the work which the municipalities have done.

The community in Bahrain, especially the people in the capital, is passing through a period of transition. Manamah is no longer just a prosperous diving town depending almost entirely upon pearls; it is rapidly becoming the commercial centre of the Gulf and, in addition to this, Bahrain is now one of the important oil-producing countries of the world. These changes, which have been very rapid, produce many new problems, some of which have to be dealt with by the local municipalities, and so far, on the whole, they are dealing with them successfully. Among the possible developments for the future which have been considered at municipal meetings, apart from water supply and drainage system, which I have mentioned, are public libraries, public baths, hot and cold, and a workhouse for aged paupers.

## THE PEARL-DIVING INDUSTRY

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**General.** For many centuries pearl diving has been the sole industry in Bahrain, on which the prosperity and the existence of the people has depended. Ten years ago it was still a flourishing concern, although big profits were not so easily made as they were some years before. Then came the collapse of the pearl market in Europe, and within a few seasons the diving industry in Bahrain shrunk to a fraction of its former importance. The revenue of the Bahrain State depended, indirectly, on the pearl trade. It consisted chiefly of customs duties on imports, and when the pearl diving flourished, divers, merchants and boat-owners had money to spend in the bazaars and shop-keepers imported large quantities of goods to sell to the public. The slump in the pearl trade was reflected in the decline of the revenue. If oil had not been discovered in Bahrain the country would now be on the verge of bankruptcy.

**The Diving System.** Both the method of diving and the system of the industry are very ancient, as is shown by descriptions of Bahrain in books written by travellers many hundreds of years ago. Theoretically, the system is a fair one, the total profits of each boat, after deducting all expenses, are divided proportionately among the pullers, divers, and the nakuda, a puller receiving one share, a diver two shares, and the nakhuda the share of five divers. There are various modifications of this system applicable in special circumstances, all of them well known and recognised in the diving community. In course of time, however, changes and abuses crept into the system. Originally the boat-owners were rich enough to finance their own boats for the season; then came a time when many of them were unable to find the large sum of money which was necessary to buy the provisions and to pay the advances which were made to the divers.

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The dealers on shore made greater profits in selling and trading in pearls than the owners of the boats who brought the pearls from the banks. The nakhudas took to borrowing money from the shore merchants at the beginning of each season, and the shore merchants demanded interest on their loans. Because interest is forbidden by the Quran, it became the practice of the merchants to make their advances in kind, by handing over bags of rice, but if a receipt was given for one hundred bags, the recipient only removed eighty bags, the remaining twenty bags representing the interest. This state of things existed over a hundred years ago and probably before then. The amount of interest varied; it was never less than 20%, and in most cases it was very much higher. All the divers, most of the nakhudas, and a great many of the merchants were illiterate, and no proper accounts were kept. Inevitably the divers suffered. The system of giving advances or loans to divers, which is also a comparatively modern innovation, was another arrangement by which the divers ultimately suffered. The diving season lasts for four months and ten days, while the sea is hot. When the industry flourished, divers, especially good men, were in great demand, and the nakhudas gave them loans, on which very high interest was charged, to enable the divers to provide for themselves during the off-season. It became the definite policy of the nakhudas to bind their divers to themselves by keeping them in debt. The first loan to a diver was a genuine payment, though frequently in kind, but it was usually the heavy rate of accumulating interest on the original debt which made it impossible for the diver ever to repay his nakhuda, and as long as a diver was in debt he was bound to dive for the man to whom he owed money. Occasionally a diver would have a stroke of luck and would earn enough to pay off his debt, but this did not suit his master, so the diver would be given a few bags of rice, which he always accepted, charged against him at fabulous price, and the interest on the alleged cost of the rice would keep the diver tied again to his nakhuda. When a diver died his sons became liable for their father's debt, on which the interest accumulated until, when boys were old enough to start diving, they found themselves already saddled with a large debt. The divers were, and still are, utterly improvident, possessed with a gambling spirit, and intensely ignorant. They always hoped that one day they would be in a boat which found a really big pearl. There was practically no other occupation except diving, and while the men were young they were glad to dive; it was when they became old that they began to complain. These old conditions, for many years now a thing of the past, gave rise to the frequent and, in my opinion, previously justified criticisms in books and in newspapers which described the conditions of the Bahrain pearl divers as almost that of slavery. Unfortunately for Bahrain, journalistic descriptions of the dreadful conditions among the pearl divers are of better news value, although previously exaggerated and now quite untrue, than descriptions of the real reforms which have been carried out in the industry during recent times. These criticisms, appearing from time to time in reputable papers, which only a few people who are, or have been, upon the spot recognise as being untrue, are most offensive to the Government of Bahrain.

**The Reforms.**

In 1923 His Excellency Shaikh Hamad, who had only recently been appointed Deputy Ruler on the suggestion of and with the support of Major Daly, who was then Political Agent in Bahrain, carried out in the face of almost universal opposition sweeping reforms in the diving system. The divers themselves, the nakhudas and the pearl merchants, were strongly opposed to any change. The divers had been persuaded that the reforms were against their own interest, and the merchants and nakhudas realised that the result of the reforms would loosen their hold over the divers and would reduce some of their profits which they obtained by cheating the divers. The movement, however, was supported by a few important and progressive pearl merchants, and by the Sunni and Shia Qadis, Shaikh Jasim Al Mehza and Shaikh Khalaf, who disapproved, on religious grounds, of a system in which interest played such a part. After a bitter struggle the reforms were carried through.

A regular system of accounts was introduced and stiff penalties were decreed against persons who did not keep them properly. Every nakhuda was made to keep a ledger showing his profit and loss, expenses, and weight and value of pearls, and every diver was given a little account book in which his debt and his earnings were entered each season. A staff of clerks were employed by the Government to check and to make up the accounts between merchants and nakhudas and divers. The rates of interest on money lent by merchants and on advances to divers were limited to a certain percentage; the amount of the bi-annual advances, Selaf and Tesqaam, which were

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paid to the divers at the beginning and at the end of the season, were decided each season by the Government and announced by proclamation, and advances in kind were forbidden. The Salafieh Court, which consisted of certain notorious merchants and nakhudas, who were supposed to judge diving cases but who were invariably prejudiced in favour of their own class, was abolished, and diving cases were tried in the ordinary courts. It became illegal for nakhudas or merchants to make their divers work without wages in gardens or houses during the off-season, and when a diver died his debt died with him and did not pass on to his children.

The ultimate success of the reforms has been proved by the fact that now, more than thirteen years after they were started, the diving rules are still in force, and many of the men who opposed them most bitterly now admit that the reforms have been beneficial. Ten years ago, however, most of the big men in the industry were still actively antagonistic to the new laws, and for several years incessant attempts were made by divers, as well as merchants and nakhudas, to evade and to upset the regulations.

**Demonstrations by Divers.** The time usually chosen for causing trouble was the occasion of the Selaf, the advance which is made to divers before the season begins, which they are supposed to use for buying food for their families while the men are at sea, and for purchasing anything which they themselves require while out at the banks. After the reforms, the amount of this advance, as well as the advance at the end of the season, was decided by the Government and announced by proclamation. It was the policy of the Government to reduce the amount of the advances every year with the intention of reducing the divers' debts. For several years the issue of the proclamation was a signal for disturbances and demonstrations which were made by the divers but suggested and organised by a certain section of pearl merchants and nakhudas, who hoped to force the Government's hand and to overthrow the new regulations and revert to the old condition. Besides the disgruntled pearl magnates, there were at that time plenty of other people who were dissatisfied with the Government and who welcomed any opportunity of stirring up trouble. Unfortunately, on two occasions when violent disturbances were made by the divers, the Ruler cancelled the proclamation and increased the advances. The divers, having got their own way by adopting violent measures, became each year more aggressive. On various occasions mobs of divers entered the bazaars and looted shops; usually they attacked the premises of an unpopular merchant or nakhuda. One of these demonstrations was made at the time of the Tesqaam advance, which happened to be on New Year's Day. When all the leading merchants were assembled at the Agency, listening to speeches eulogising the happy conditions in Bahrain, a messenger arrived, saying that a mob of divers from Muharraq was looting the bazaar. Another year the divers went on strike and refused to take the boats out; finally, in 1932, a crisis was reached. Without any warning a mob of several thousand divers from Muharraq and Hedd, armed with clubs, iron bars, etc., landed on the shore at Ras Romaan, proceeded to the police station, which they attacked, released the prisoners, and started towards the bazaar. Some of the present police force, who were then new, local naturs and a few Punjabi police, were rushed to the scene. The situation was serious; there was a free fight all along the sea road from the customs to the Political Agency, and during the fighting the naturs, without orders, used their rifles. Four of the divers were shot and several were wounded. The mob dispersed, and this was the last time that the divers caused any trouble. Since then the amount of the advances has been decided at a meeting which is held every year between the leading men of the pearl trade and representatives of the Government; the responsibility for the decision is shared between the Government and the merchants.

**The Slump.** The continued decline in the pearl trade can be seen from the following figures. The estimate of the value of the catch is only approximate, and has been obtained partly by calculations based on averages from the actual figures supplied by the diving clerks. The diving clerks do not record all the accounts of all the boats, as now many of the nakhudas employ their own clerks. The figures represent the amount paid to the nakhudas by the first purchaser, but before the pearls leave Bahrain they probably change hands many times, and each time at a considerably higher price. Ten years ago, important Indian and Continental pearl merchants used to visit Bahrain every year towards the end of the

●228 diving season to buy pearls, but as the state of the pearl market deteriorated, these buyers ceased coming, and lately most of the Bahrain pearls have been sent to Bombay, to be sold to buyers for the European markets.

| *Year.* | *Number of Boats Diving.* | *Number of Divers.* | *Value of Catch. Rs* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1345 | 515 | 19,250 | Not recorded. |
| 1346 | 507 | 18,500 | " |
| 1347 | 531 | 19,650 | " |
| 1348 | 538 | 20,150 | " |
| 1349 | 509 | 19,300 | 21,25,000/- |
| 1350 | 504 | 17,600 | 18,32,000/- |
| 1351 | 456 | 16,650 | 12,14,000/- |
| 1352 | 436 | 16,000 | 13,40,000/- |
| 1353 | 340 | 12,700 | 10,00,000/- |
| 1354 | 316 | 11,550 | 8,33,000/- |
| 1355 | 264 | 9,800 | 6,07,000/- |

NOTE.—Value of catch and number of divers is only approximate.

Value of catch is calculated from actual figures of diving clerks, to which is added an average of those boats whose catches are not recorded by diving clerks.

Number of divers is obtained from the diving-boat licences, which specify that not more than a certain number of men may be carried in boats of the various classes. The number of divers may possibly be less than the figures given above, but not more.

Various causes have contributed to the slump in the pearl trade, the chief reasons being the recent years of financial depression in Europe and the success of Japanese cultured pearls. Other matters which have affected the market are changes in women's fashions, which tend to reduce the amount of jewellery which is worn, and the popularity and cheapness of motor cars and wireless sets. Nowadays men give women cars and wireless sets instead of pearl necklaces. There has been a very great increase in the sale of cultured pearls during the last five years, and their price has fallen correspondingly. When they first appeared on the market they were sold at about one-third the price of real pearls; now they cost less than one thirtieth the price of real pearls. This, in some ways, is an advantage. The cultured pearls are rapidly taking the place of the artificial pearls such as are made by Ciro and Tekla. Both these firms are now selling quantities of cheap cultured necklaces, and a cultured pearl necklace can be bought at a price only a little higher than that of a good artificial pearl necklace. The artificial pearl trade, according to a trade statement, has been affected to the extent of six million pounds since the introduction of cultured pearls.

**Diving Mortgages.** The depression has affected the diving industry in various ways. In times of prosperity merchants willingly advanced large sums of money to nakhudas with no security except the knowledge that they had first claim on the boats' catch, and that if the nakhuda became bankrupt the merchant could take over the boats and divers. Now, and for some years back, owing to uncertain conditions, no merchant will advance money for diving without taking a security for his loan, either title deeds of property or gold ornaments. Nakhudas, as a class, rarely owned land or immovable property except the house in which they lived, and in order to get money to equip their boats and pay the advances to their divers many of them mortgaged their houses. After several cases in which merchants foreclosed on mortgages and turned the nakhudas out of their houses, it was decided by the Government that the actual living house of a nakhuda should not be liable in case of a diving debt. The changed conditions brought to the front a few nakhudas who, because they happened to own gardens or other immovable property, were able to obtain loans more easily than many bigger men whose wealth was entirely in boats and divers.

**Divers' Debts.** One of the chief objects of the reforms was to reduce the debts of the divers to their nakhudas. Ten years ago, both merchants and nakhudas were opposed to any reduction in the advances because they knew that it would eventually result in divers being free to dive for whoever they chose; the divers themselves

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A Small Pearling Dhow

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have, naturally, at all times wanted as much as they can get. As conditions changed, the position became reversed. The Government has always realised that a small, genuine advance at the beginning of the season and during the off-season is necessary, but since money has become scarce in the diving community the Government has had to argue with the nakhudas and merchants to persuade them to make any advance at all. The following figures show the decrease in the bi-annual advances.

| Year. | Tesgaam | | Stla. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Diver. Rs | Puller. Rs | Diver. Rs | Puller. Rs |
| 1344 | 100/- | 80/- | 60/- | 60/- |
| 1345 | 80/- | 60/- | 100/- | 80/- |
| 1346 | 100/- | 80/- | 100/- | 80/- |
| 1347 | 100/- | 80/- | 130/- | 105/- |
| 1348 | 100/- | 80/- | 80/- | 60/- |
| 1349 | 55/- | 45/- | — | — |
| 1350 | 55/- | 45/- | 55/- | 45/- |
| 1351 | 30/- | 25/- | 30/- | 25/- |
| 1352 | 30/- | 25/- | 30/- | 25/- |
| 1353 | 30/- | 25/- | 30/- | 25/- |
| 1354 | 20/- | 15/- | 20/- | 15/- |
| 1355 | 20/- | 15/- | 20/- | 15/- |

The result of reducing the advances is that men who have begun diving during the last five years either pay off their debts altogether or owe only small sums to their nakhudas. Unfortunately, old divers who started before the reforms still owe large sums which they will never be able to pay off. Last year a record was made by the court of the debts of over 500 divers, all of them men owing money, of whom perhaps 50% had started diving before the reforms. According to these figures the average diver owed Rs 507/-, but out of the five hundred men, eight owed between Rs 2,000/- and Rs 3,000/- each and nine men owed over Rs 1,000/- each. As the diving industry has shrunk in importance, the value of a diver has declined. An example of this is the practice of nakhudas, who gladly cancel from half to one-third of a diver's debt if he is enlisted as a policeman, provided that he repays the rest of his debt at the rate of Rs 5/- per month. The old divers will never repay their debts, but the new generation of divers will never become heavily in debt unless Bahrain reverts to the state which existed before the reforms. Although nowadays nakhudas cannot afford to make large advances, they constantly complain that the new generation of debtless divers do not work as well as the old men who owed big sums. They complain that divers resent the discipline of the nakhuda while out at the banks, and they attribute, quite wrongly, part of the recent depression in the industry to the deterioration in the divers themselves. Men who have become divers since the reforms know that if they are ill-treated by their nakhuda they can resort to the courts. A few years ago, complaints about ill-treatment were frequent, but after several examples had been made, such complaints have almost ceased; there has been a similar decrease in complaints by divers about their accounts.

**Transfer of Divers.**

Certain local practices in the diving industry, which are not clearly understood outside Bahrain, are likely to be misinterpreted and to create an impression that divers are liable to be bought and sold. This is not the case.

If a nakhuda cannot find money to equip his boat and to pay advances, he lets his boat to another nakhuda, if he is lucky enough to find a tenant, and releases his divers on 'baruas.' The 'barua' is a document issued by the nakhuda, allowing a diver to seek employment with another nakhuda for the season, within Bahrain, on the condition that the new nakhuda who takes on the diver pays to the original nakhuda one-third of the diver's earnings in part satisfaction of the diver's debt. If the diver finds work on shore, he pays a definite sum for the season to his nakhuda.

If a nakhuda becomes bankrupt because the merchant who finances him demands a settlement, the merchant has the right to take over the diving craft, at a valuation, and to take over the divers

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for the amount which they owe to their nakhuda. The divers then work for the merchant; if he owns boats he can order them to dive in his boats, but if he does not own boats he cannot employ them directly himself: he is compelled to give them 'baruas' to dive with any nakhuda who will employ them. If any diver has an objection to diving in the boat of a nakhuda who has taken him on from his original nakhuda, he is entitled to apply to the court, which issues him with a 'barua.' In the past it was the custom of the merchant who took over divers in this manner to employ them during the off-season on any sort of labour, but this was stopped when the diving reforms were made. The transfer of a diver from one owner to another without the diver having any right to protest used, certainly, to resemble a condition of slavery. If the merchant who takes over the divers is an ordinary shop-keeper, as is sometimes the case, he now has no right to place the divers out in other people's boats. His means of recovering his claim is from the one-third earnings of the divers if they happen to find nakhudas.

**The Catch.** During recent years the catch has deteriorated, and fewer large pearls have been found. It is said that there is a greater proportion of barren shells, but it is almost impossible to check this statement. There is a definite feeling that it would be advisable to close certain banks for a season or two, but this could only be done in conjunction with other Gulf pearling States. It has also been suggested locally that all diving should be altogether stopped for one season to give the banks a rest and to give an impetus to the pearl market. There would be an opportunity for those merchants who still hold big stocks of old pearls to dispose of them. I believe that if the banks were closed for a season there would be a recovery in the industry, but the employment of many thousands of divers for four months of the year would be a difficult and expensive problem, and no such scheme would be possible without the co-operation of other Gulf States. The market is now clogged by a number of big merchants, such as Shaikh Mohomed Ali Zainal who hold vast stocks of pearls which they bought when prices were high. These pearls have not yet been fully paid for, and many Bahrain merchants, the original sellers, are still waiting for payment. It is the practice for buyers of pearls to pay for them when they re-sell, and this system has become a vicious circle: until the big merchants sell they cannot pay the medium merchants, and until the medium merchants are paid they cannot pay the small men.

**Recent Changes.** The actual method of diving is still what it was centuries ago, but there have been some slight changes in recent years. In 1925, a motor launch was used by a pearl merchant, who went out to the banks and bought a number of pearls at a cheap price because none of the rival merchants were there to compete. This action roused a storm of protest, and a proclamation was issued by the Government forbidding the use of launches at the pearl banks during the season. It was announced that the following year there would be no such restriction. Next year several launches were used, and since then launches are always used by buyers, who go to the banks to buy from the fleet, and frequently for sending supplies out to the boats.

For some years the Government sent a large sailing boat, equipped as a hospital-boat, to the banks during the diving season. This arrangement was expensive and not very satisfactory. The boom has now been sold, and every year the Government sends out an Indian doctor in a motor launch, who makes several trips to the pearling fleet and, when necessary, brings back sick men to the shore.

At the time of writing, the Government, in order to assist the diving community in Bahrain, has reduced the licences for diving-boats by 50%, and has also postponed the date of payment of licences from one month before the commencement of the season to two months after the season begins. This action will result in a loss of revenue to the Government of about Rs 15,000/-, but it is expected that it will cause an increase in the number of boats which go diving in the summer of 1937.

It is difficult to prophesy the future of the diving industry. The demand for real pearls may possibly increase; there are many people in the pearl trade who are confident that the markets will improve, but not even the most optimistic think that the pearl business will ever again become what it was in the past, when both Arabs and Europeans made huge fortunes out of Bahrain pearls.

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# INTRODUCTION

101 131 About midway of the Persian Gulf and some fifteen miles off the coast of Arabia, lie the Bahrein Islands at the mouth of the Gulf of Bahrein, of which the Qatar Peninsula forms the western side. There are five principal islands, only two of which are of real consequence. The largest and by far the most important is variously called Awal, Al Manāmah after the principal city, or more commonly just Bahrein. The last is the modern designation.

103 In ancient times, the name "Bahrein" was applied to a larger area which included the Arabian mainland of Qatar and Hajar and the land situated between Mesopotamia and the Gulf of Oman (the Indian Ocean); this area took in the entire southern coast of the Persian Gulf. This has caused widespread misinterpretation of much of the writings of pre-Islamic and Medieval historians. Throughout this book we shall use the term "Bahrein" in its modern sense to refer to the archipelago of Bahrein proper or to the central island, except where the mainland province is clearly indicated.

132 511 Bahrein today has few attractions. There is not much to recommend it as a place of residence, as it is intensely hot for about seven months of the year, and for many of the native inhabitants lacking in comfortable living conditions. For tourists it is rather off the beaten track. Nevertheless, through the centuries these bits of land have been considered well worth fighting for by both European and Asiatic empires.

228 648 312 The reason for Bahrein's unusual and enduring importance can be summed up in two words—pearls and strategy. The pearl fisheries of Bahrein have been known all over the world since the dawn of history and, thanks to an abundance of fresh water springs, the island was a frequent stopping place for ships on the trade routes to India and the Far East.

648 175 The Portuguese, the first European power to have an Asiatic colonial empire, fought hard for possession of the islands.

Bahrein produces dates of very good quality, though inferior to the Iraqi and especially to the Persian variety known in the United States as the Bassorah date. The entire date production of Bahrein is consumed locally, either fresh or dried, or in a powder which is used like wheat flour for the making of bread, the common food of the rich.

The economic value of the date palm does not stop with the fruit. All other parts of the palm yield products of practical value to Bahreinis; their life would be impossible without it. The trunk furnishes timber for houses and boats; the midribs of the leaves go into crates and furniture; the leaf bases are used for fuel; the small leaves are used in basketry, the fiber for cordage and packing, and the fruit stalks for rope and fuel.

Under the shade of their palm trees and around their springs, the Bahreinis live their relatively simple life, producing some vegetables, weaving a few shawls, making sailcloth or reed mats, and breeding their donkeys. The Bahrein donkeys, or "Bandari," were bought by donkey lovers for their endurance, their height, and other celebrated qualities.

The main occupations of the townspeople are commercial and maritime, mostly fishing and handling the transit shipments which are one of Bahrein's largest sources of revenue. The greatest economic asset of the islands, however, despite the value of the recently discovered oil, is still the pearl fisheries.

## PEARL FISHING

The chief source of income of the islands before the discovery and exploitation of oil reserves in the nineteen thirties was pearl fishing. Before the rise of competition from the Japanese *pearl fisheries and worldwide economic crisis of 1930, the indus*try employed more than 20,000 persons annually, and revenue from the pearls, which were exported principally to Paris and London, amounted to about £2,000,000[1] annually. Single pearls often bring enormous prices; for example, the most beautiful

1. Except where otherwise specified, pounds referred to throughout are English pounds sterling.

6:Faroughy H-5 (no date)1951 MZ2 Bahrain MZ2

pearl found in the 1929 season was sold to one of the four leading dealers for 1,500,000 francs, or about $75,000.[1] The industry at times has produced as much as $8,000,000 worth of pearls, to which should be added about $100,000 in revenue from mother-of-pearl shell which is highly valued in the Western world, though of less interest to Orientals. The real profits, however, begin with the Arab and Hindu dealers in Bombay, whence the pearls are shipped to the jewel markets east and west, at each exchange acquiring a greater value and thus ministering to human ostentation.

The Big Four among the pearl dealers were formerly the Houses of Rosenthal, Pack, Mohammad Ali and Bienenfeld, all of Paris,[2] but after the beginning of World War II the market moved to Bombay.

The banks that are fished most often are the shallow waters of the Arabian coast and those that lie between the twenty-fourth and twenty-seventh parallels north, and the fiftieth and fifty-fifth east. The most famous are situated between the islands of Sir Beni Yas and Shiltaye.

The pearl may be described as the result of a kind of "occupational disease" of the oyster, which in opening its shell to obtain food often takes in gritty particles which cause irritation. Nature provides a remedy in the form of a secretion that covers the offending particle with a smooth coat of nacre. Once started, the process continues indefinitely, each year adding to the size of the pearl which results. Many kinds of molluscs of both fresh and salt water varieties produce pearls of some kind, varying greatly in shape, size, color, and commercial value. The most prolific of the pearl producing oysters in the Gulf, the *Mahharahs*, grow to about two inches in diameter, and are collected when three years old. Large pearls are called "Unions"[3]

1. We are not far from the time of Pliny, when the price of Indian and Arabian pearls was second only to that paid for the *adamas*, or diamond.
2. It is reported that some Gulf pearls sold to Cartier were purchased by the Duchess of Windsor for $20,000, and a single pearl of the same origin was finally sold to Barbara Hutton for $15,000.
3. Cf.: If all the world were but one ring
Ormuz should the union bring.

worn by a woman in public is as good as a lictor walking before her."[1] With or without lictors, however, no woman neglected to display her jewelry. Lollia Paulina, the wife of the Emperor Caligula, is said to have been wearing at an informal "betrothal" party emeralds and pearls valued at forty million sesterces. Pliny adds maliciously: indeed she was prepared at once to prove the fact, by showing the receipts and acquittances.

Later centuries saw the pearl trade expand, and at Bahrein as many as three thousand boats were used annually in pearl fishing, employing nearly half the population of the islands. Little by little the pearl lost its glamor, and with less demand has declined in value. At the end of the last century a very fine quality pearl the size of a pea could be purchased for around a pound sterling. Vanitas vanitatis.

If the market has fluctuated in London or Paris, nothing has changed in this "Sea of the Changeable Winds" since the time of the Assyrians, and the diver of the Persian Gulf today dives from the same kind of boat and in the same way his ancestors did many generations ago. The pearl fishing boats (*Mahaila*), product of local labor, have long been standardized. They range in size from one to fifty tons and carry a single sail and mast, though a few are equipped with a small motor which turns a toy-like propeller. The small boats keep near home but the larger ones sail about freely in the Gulf, often for weeks at a time, as long as their supply of water holds out. The crews vary from fifteen to twenty men.

The diver's traditional equipment consists of a basket to hold the oysters, a rope with a stone attached to carry him down and another to pull him up, a leather clothespin-like contrivance or a forked bone to close his nostrils, ear stoppers of beeswax, and leather sheaths to protect his fingers and big toes. The Persian merchants tried a few years ago to persuade the divers to adopt modern diving equipment, including helmets, but the protest was so great that the Sheik outlawed its use.

1. The honor of being preceded by a lictor was reserved to members of the imperial family.

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The diver puts his foot in a loop in his rope and goes down with the weight of the attached stone. When he has gathered as many oysters as he can, he gives a signal and the basket is pulled up. The stone follows, and last of all the diver, who by this time is not infrequently dead. 228

The average dive is about eight fathoms, and fifty seconds is the usual time under water, though it may be as long as three minutes. There are numerous accounts of much longer submersions, but it is impossible to fix the point where truth ends and romance begins in these tall tales. In any case, though the diver may come up more dead than alive, he is expected to make trips at five or six minute intervals, that is, diving fifty to sixty times in a single working day. Ten to twelve oysters is a good average for one dive.

It is little wonder that the divers are plagued by a multitude of occupational diseases. At the outset, suffocation is a constant danger. To protect their skin against rotting, the divers take the precaution of rubbing in an astringent called *Zift* (pine resin) every night before retiring. Every diver suffers from earache, and water pressure ruptures the eardrums of many of the men so that deafness is common. Water pressure also may break the blood vessels of the lungs, and the diver often comes from the water bleeding from the nose and ears. Sooner or later because of the pressure and salinity of the water many divers go blind. Bad teeth, rheumatism, and neuralgia are common, as well as the more serious acute bronchitis and heart trouble, to say nothing of the risk of being killed or maimed when attacked by dangerous fish. However, even divers who have lost an arm or a leg, or have been blinded, often continue to work. 228 164

It may not be out of place to recall here the beautiful verses of Matthew Arnold and to add "if the diver has a hut":

> *"And dear as the wet diver to the eyes*
> *Of his pale wife, who waits and weeps on shore,*
> *By sands of Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf;*
> *Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,*
> *Having made up his tale of precious pearls,*
> *Rejoins her in their hut upon the shore."*

The economic status of the divers is as desperate as their physical hardships. Their houses are huts which they build for themselves of woven palm leaves. Wages are paid in advance through the ship owners and financed by merchants who take profits in advance of ten or twenty per cent, according to the season. In the best diving season—from June to September—the divers have little more than enough for the barest necessities; but in the winter months when cold weather and high winds seriously impede and eventually halt their work; in order to keep alive the men have to resort to borrowing at high rates of interest, and so never get out of debt. As a consequence, condemned to a difficult, unhealthy and probably short life, the pearl diver is an inveterate gambler.

Since the abolition of the ancient Tribunal of Salifah in 1926, the captain of the boats has been required by law to keep an account of expenses and of the advances made to the divers, the taxes on which are fixed. The divers do not receive set wages, but after expenses have been deducted and the captain has taken his share of twenty per cent, the remainder is divided among the crew. The diver (*gawās*) receives twice as much as the hauler (*sib*) since his work is more dangerous. The second in command of the boat receives three parts of the profits (i.e. an amount equal to that of one diver and one hauler). He is called the Thursday, from a Persian word, probably because he is in charge of the boat on Thursdays, the captain's day off.

A comparatively recent traveler in the Near East has stated that there are occasional strikes for higher pay, though not the kind to which we are accustomed. It is the Sheik who declares the strike—and pockets the proceeds.

The diving season starts the middle of April and ends the middle of October. It is divided into five periods, the first of which, the *Ghaws al Bard*, begins the middle of April and lasts about a month. Deep sea fishing is not attempted and the divers relieve each other every half hour or so on account of the cold. The workers' share of the profits for this period is divided equally among the divers and the haulers because the latter have to

6:Faroughy H-5 (no date)1951 MZ2 Bahrain MZ2

work harder than in the summer. Between the *Ghaws al Bard* and the great season, or *Ghaws al Kabir*, is the period called *Kanchi-yah*, which lasts about two weeks. Then the fishing season *par excellence*, the great *Khaws al Kabir*, begins at the end of June, after the season of the northwestern wind, and lasts until the middle of October. This period is inaugurated by a proclamation of the Sheik setting the dates of the opening and closing of the season. The two week period of *Raaba* follows and finally, with the coming of cold weather, the *Mujannah*, a period of indefinite length, when fishing is carried on mainly in the shallow coastal waters.

There are two methods commonly used to finance the diving. The best known is for the captain of the boat to borrow money from a merchant on shore in order to advance the men's wages and equip and provision the boat for the season. At the end of the season, after the pearls have been sold, the loan is repaid; the captain takes one-fifth of the profits, and the remainder is divided among the divers and haulers. Since the captain charges interest to the men on the money he has advanced, their pay is quite small and they are constantly in debt.

Another and more efficient system has little by little begun to replace the one just described. The shore merchant, as before, finances the expedition but charges no interest. In return, he has the right to purchase the pearls at 20% below the prevailing market rate and also to collect a share of the profits equal to that of five divers.

Bahrein has long had to compete with the pearl fisheries of Ceylon, but much more serious, at least until the outbreak of World War II, was the invasion of the market by the Japanese growers of cultured pearls. The cultured pearls can be told from "natural" ones only by means of delicate X-ray and specific gravity tests and differ essentially only in the way they are produced. The oysters are grown in beds and irritating objects are inserted in the shells to force the formation of the pearls. The contrast in method is essentially that between agriculture and random hunting for food in the forest.

228 Because of the vastly more economical methods involved in the production of cultured pearls, the Japanese industry threatened to flood the market, and not only brought down the cost of the pearls but also dissipated some of the glamour which has been for so long associated with them. As a result of this competition the fisheries of Bahrein began to suffer and the income of the Sheik to decline. In turn, however, royalties from oil concessions in some measure supplemented his income.[1]

## FISHING

226 [262] Fishing is a major occupation of the Bahreinis and an important source of income. Cooked with dates, onions, and a small quantity of rice and barley, fish, fresh or salt, constitutes the national diet of Bahrein. Indeed, fish which have been dried in the sun form the staple food of the majority of the inhabitants of the Persian Gulf, not only of human beings but of dogs, horses, and camels. Besides the local use of fish, there is also a flourishing trade between the Gulf regions and Mauritius, India, and elsewhere in salt and dried fish, shark fins, fish scales, and fish oil.

The most important fish found in this region are:

Cuttlefish, or sepia octopus (*Tankah* or *Khatak*). Eaten in large quantities by the Arabs, who consider it a great delicacy. It is also the most popular bait for hook and line fishing.

Muraena (*Metut*). Known in Oman as *Kasha*. A small fish-like eel which, dried in the sun, is used as human food, feed for horses and cattle, and as fertilizer.

Porpoise (*Dukhs* or *Dughs*). The oil is used for commercial purposes.

Rock Cod (*Hamam*). Found in shallow waters.

Sardine (*'Oom*). Caught in enormous quantities and used both for food and fertilizer.

Scad, or horse mackerel. (*Sewah*). Salted in large quantities for both home consumption and export.

Seer fish (*Kan'ad*). The *Shirmahee*, or Indian Salmon.

1. See below, p. 45.

6:Faroughy H-5 (no date)1951 MZ2 Bahrain MZ2

175 mitted to his murderers, crossed over to Qatar, where they joined Ali at Qarya. They subsequently attacked and plundered a Bahrein boat, carrying off pearls and monies amounting to over 1,000 rupees. Sheik Isa accepted the accomplished fact, and consented to the departure of the disaffected elements, later on authorizing the families of the men to join them on the mainland.

To prevent the local Sheik from disturbing the peace of the Gulf, the Persian and British Governments had recently signed the International Convention on traffic of arms. The two Governments in their partnership of policing the Gulf, had instructed their Navy to cooperate by tracking down the smuggling of arms between their respective territories. Consequently, the following proclamation was published by the Sheik of Bahrein:

"Be it known to all who see this that British and Persian vessels of war have permission to search vessels carrying their and our flags in Bahrein territorial waters, and to confiscate all arms and ammunition (weapons of war) in them, if those arms and ammunitions are intended for Indian or Persian ports or the Island of Bahrein. . . ."

## 20th CENTURY

648 At the end of the 19th century and the opening of the 20th, the Persian Gulf became the main center of international intrigue. The Russians opened a series of consulates, and organized and subsidized steamer services.

In 1901, the German firm of Prins und Sturken, of Hamburg, opened a branch in Bahrein. In February 1902, two Frenchmen, Dumas and Castelin, arrived in Bahrein to open a business, and a German assistant to Woenkhaus and Company, of Hamburg, arrived later in the same year.

Three years later, Woenkhaus who was already dealing in [22?] mother-of-pearl, transferred their main center of business from Lingah to Bahrein, where they asked a concession from the Sheik for the exploitation of pearl fisheries.

Prevented by the British, they then applied to Constantinople

648 *London Times* of March 6, 1942. In July of the same year, the personal salute of the ruler of Bahrein was fixed at eleven guns.

On the occasion of his succession, Salman issued the following manifesto:

"We, Salman, have succeeded to the throne according to the promise which our father made to us, with the unanimous consent of our paternal uncles and our brothers and all of our tribe. We declare solemnly as our father ordered us, with the help of God to remain firmly attached to our religion, to be vigilant, to ameliorate the conditions of our tribe and our country, to act according to justice and equity, and, acting to reinforce the old ties of friendship which bound our country to England, to remain faithful forever to her friendship. We pray God, the All-Merciful and All-Powerful, to protect, guide, and help us."

722 The realities of war were brought home to Bahrein by price control and rationing system. The Government bought and imported all food supplies for the population, shops were opened in towns and in villages for rationed goods, and the queue system introduced.

There occurred a shortage of rice, staff food of the population, due to the drastic reduction of shipping facilities and the loss to the Japanese of Burma, Indo China and other producing centers. Rice was replaced by wheat, and as a result there was vast discontent among the population.

The black market flourished, and smuggling was rampant, Goods whose export was forbidden, were smuggled out of the country. At one time a bag of sugar could be bought in Bahrein for about 80 rupees; opposite on the Persian Coast, the same bag would be sold for 800 rupees. Motor tires were sold at fabulous prices in Persia and Iraq, and tea was a profitable commodity for smugglers.

722 228 The pearl industry flourished, although the fleets of diving boats were smaller because many divers preferred to earn money on the shore, and high prices were obtained for pearls in India, where people invested money in precious stones. No European

buyers visited the Gulf, and few, if any pearls were sent to Europe. 722 228

Owing to important developments in the Bahrein oil industry and war time public works, there was a great demand for labour. Not only manual labourers and skilled men, but any young Arabs with slight education could obtain well paid posts. 722

Many Bahreini invested their money in gardens and house property which resulted in a land boom. Axis broadcasts were forbidden in public places but most people listened to them in their houses.

To prevent any disturbances, very strong security measures were taken, and the police force numbered some 700 people.

The population sympathized with the Arabs of Palestine in their resistance to Jewish immigration, and in Bahrein, serious rioting broke out in answer to American stands concerning the partition of the Holy Land. Manama synagogue and scores of Jewish shops were wrecked and the Jews were beaten. At the same time, posters appeared on the streets at night denouncing Americans as the "foreigners who steal our oil." 648 722

To forestall any trouble, a Military Government was declared in Bahrein, and extraordinary precautions taken. These measures were resented by the Bahreini who complained to Persia.

The old quarrel over the ownership of Bahrein was revived, and the Cabinet decided on April 18, 1946, to charge taxes and royalties on oil entering Iran from Bahrein. The tax was fixed at $.80 a barrel, plus 20% of the annual net revenue of the Company, that is, the equivalent of the tax collected on the production of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in Iran. 648 [651]

At the end of 1947, a delegation from Bahrein arrived in Teheran. The delegation was headed by a very prominent Sheik who was to represent Bahrein at the Iranian Parliament. He was received in a secret session of the Parliament, but as he was not duly elected, according to Persian election laws, it was decided that Majlis could not take any step in regard to its admission. In the session of April 15, 1948, the Parliament

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
Bahrain M12



adequate motor-bus communications with most of the villages.

Manama is the shipping centre of the Gulf pearl industry,[1] and steamers connect regularly with India, Persia, and Iraq. Bahrain harbour is also the centre of a considerable coastal and pearling trade by dhows, as well as the local headquarters of its fishing industry. Other local industries are dhow-building and the manufacture of sailcloth and reed matting. Much of the import and export trade from al-Hasa and its hinterland passes through Bahrain, and this created an important source of revenue during the years in which Aramco was developing its oilfields on the Saudi coast. Lately, however, the Saudis have perceived the advantage of conducting this trade for themselves. By establishing a high-cost re-entry permit, they have discouraged the foreign staff of the oil company from doing its week-end shopping in Bahrain, and their policy is to increase the port and market facilities of the two Saudi coastal towns opposite the island—Damman and Al Khobar. In Bahrain there is a duty of 5 per cent ad valorem on essential imports such as food and clothing; non-essential imports are subject to higher duties, ranging between 15 per cent on tobacco and liquor, and 10 per cent on luxuries.

*History and Foreign Relations*

The presence in the northern part of Bahrain Island of numerous burial tumuli indicates very early human inhabitants, but their identity, which was at one time thought to be Phoenician, remains unknown. Bahrain's situation and natural harbour facilities suggest that from the earliest days of sea navigation in the Gulf the port was important. Its recorded history, however, dates only from 1507, when the Portuguese occupied the island. They built a fort of which the ruins survive, but were driven out in 1602 by an Arab invasion from Persia. Bahrain was held by Persia intermittently until 1783, when it was conquered by Arabs from the mainland. Since 1816 it has been ruled by the Khalifa family of the Utubi tribe, which in 1820 first entered into treaty relations with the East India Company. But the Persian Government has never ceased to claim sovereignty over the island and at intervals has protested against British treaties with the Shaikh. The Persian claim is based on a British Note of 27 April 1869 in which (the Persians allege)[2] Lord Clarendon recognized their title to sovereignty over the

[1] This has long been important, and in the 1830's the fisheries were estimated to bring in some £300,000 to £400,000 a year.

[2] The Persian claim was disposed of by Sir Austen Chamberlain in a Note of 18 January 1928. See League of Nations, *Official Journal*, May 1928, pp. 606–7.

63:Simmons et al G-5 (1941-1951) 1954
M1 Middle East
BAHRAIN M22

nama, Muharraq and Hedd and the 3 villages of East and West Rafaa and Sakhir was less than 1 per cent.

## Social Economy

Prior to the opening of the Bahrain oil fields, the economy of the islands was based upon pearl fishing and the transshipment of goods between Iran, India and other countries and the neighboring Arabian ports. The waters of the Persian Gulf contain famous pearl fishing banks, and, since ancient times, Bahrain has been recognized as the traditional center of the industry. It constituted the principal source of wealth for centuries, but it reached a low level in the 1920s, due in part to the competition of Japanese cultured pearls in the world markets. Early records are nonexistent, but the former Bahrain pearl fleets probably consisted of 600 to 1,000 vessels. The number has declined progressively: only 83 departed for the banks in 1950. In that year, about 2,000 Bahrainis were engaged in pearl fishing during the season from mid-April to October, undoubtedly a fraction of the total employed when the demand for pearls was at its height.

In previous decades, dhow building also was one of the major industries of Bahrain, but its decline has paralleled that of the pearl fisheries. Nine boats were constructed in 1949, as against 100 reported in 1928-29.

Today, oil is the foundation of Bahrain's prosperity. The royalties derived from the industry not only have bolstered the declining resources of the government, but have made possible the expansion of public works and social services. Operations are conducted by the Bahrain Petroleum Company, Ltd., which holds long-term concessions from the Sheikh of Bahrain for the development of the petroleum resources of the islands. Oil was discovered in the Jabal ad Dukhan region, near the center of Bahrain Island, in 1932, and production started in 1934. The proven reserves of this field are estimated in the neighborhood of 200 million barrels. The company also operates a

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refinery on the eastern side of the island, opposite Sitra. It was expanded in 1945, and 80 to 85 per cent of the crude oil processed is now obtained by pipeline from Saudi Arabia. The refined petroleum products are pumped to storage tanks on Sitra Island, and subsequently to a deep-water loading terminal 3 miles offshore. Over 6,000 Bahrainis, as well as some 1,600 British and Americans, are employed in different branches of the industry. Two thirds of the royalties accrue to the Bahrain government, half of which are utilized for capital expenditures designed to raise the standards of living of the people. Reports for 1951 indicate that 68 per cent of the government income was derived from oil revenues, as against 26 per cent from customs receipts.

The renewed prosperity of the islands and the concurrent growth in population have stimulated private enterprise and the growth of small factories to supply current needs, particularly as regards building materials. Fishing is an important seasonal occupation of many villagers, and preserved fish, fish oils and other fish products are items of export. Agriculture plays a minor role. Barely 5 to 10 per cent of the total land area is under cultivation, and further expansion is restricted by the nature of the terrain, the concentration of water supply in limited areas and a feudalistic system of land tenure. Date gardens flourish in oases on Bahrain, Muharraq and Sitra Islands, but the supply equals less than one quarter of the local requirements. The government is endeavoring to promote the introduction of other crops, and maintains an experiment station at Budaiya.

The sea approaches to the archipelago are shallow, making it necessary for ocean vessels and oil tankers to anchor 2 to 4 miles from the shore. Bahrain and Muharraq, however, have good harbors which accommodate dhows and other shallow-draft vessels. Manama is an active trading center: coastal traffic is more or less continuous, while frequent steamer services are available to the northern Gulf ports and to India AND PAKISTAN.

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30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
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comes the north wind, and in violence the south-wester (*Qaus*), which is fiercely hot in August and blows irregularly between December and April. See further, vol. ii. p. 346 f.

## Population

Though no census has been taken, the population of the 4 towns and 104 villages in the principality has been estimated as over 100,000, of whom 60,000, chiefly townsmen, are Sunni, and 40,000, chiefly villagers, Shiah. The latter are for the most part *Bahārinah* (see p. 299), but this class, which is mainly agricultural, is here hardly above the servile state. The most numerous Sunni community is that of the *Hūwalah*, who are townsmen of Manāmah, Muharraq, Budeyya', Hadd, and Hālah Bin Anas, living by trade and without solidarity among themselves or influence on others. The 'Utūb, Sādah, and Dawāsir are the most influential tribesmen, the first on account of their connexion with the ruling family, the second by virtue of their supposed sacred origin, the Dawāsir because they are well disciplined by their chief and comparatively wealthy; there are also a few Beni Khālid (see below, p. 608). The remainder of the Sunni population live mostly on the coast, and depend for their subsistence rather on the sea than on cultivation. There are at least 5,000 free negroes and 6,000 negro slaves; a few Persians, Hindus, Basra Arabs and Jews complete the population. Life in Bahrein is more various and many-coloured than on the mainland of Arabia; the exclusiveness of a people cut off from intercourse with other races is absent, and the opportunity to indulge a taste for luxury has not been disdained. Direct relations with Persia and India have influenced costume, domestic appliances, and the architecture of the larger houses, in which the pointed arch is a conspicuous feature.

## Industries and Trade

The most important occupation in Bahrein is pearl-fishing, and the fisheries are the most valuable in the Gulf next to those of Trucial Oman. Were the fisheries to cease, most of the urban population would have to leave the country. They employ more than 900 boats, each with a crew of about 20, the total crews amounting to nearly 20,000 men. The pearling season opens in May, and some boats continue operations until about October. Special measures had to be taken in 1915 by the Sheikh, in conjunction with the British Resident, to enable the pearl-fishing population to tide over the crisis caused by the stoppage of the

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
BAHRAIN M22



228 pearl-trade during the war. Sea fisheries are also extensive, the fish being taken in nets and in tidal weirs or enclosures (*hadhrahs*) made of reeds, some of which surround large areas in the shallow waters round the coasts; 500 lb. of fish a day were supplied without
241 difficulty to the Indian Expeditionary Force in 1914. Agriculture is carried on by irrigation, the chief products being fruit (dates, citrons, limes, melons, figs, &c., but few of the first quality), lucerne, and a few vegetables; a great belt of date-groves on Bahrein Island runs S. from Manāmah to the village of Būri, a distance of about
231 7 miles. Domestic animals include about 2,000 donkeys, less than 100 horses owned by the Sheikh and his family, about 100 camels, chiefly used in carrying water to Manāmah for sale, and a small but fine local breed of cattle, in high repute for their milking qualities. Of the donkeys, some 200 are of the famous breed imported from Hasa, from 12 to 13 hands, and white in colour.

433 The chief handicrafts are sail-making, weaving of abbas, lungis, and checked sheeting, and the manufacture of mats from Hasa reeds. Palgrave described the *Bahārinah* as excelling in the crafts of the weaver, the tailor, the dyer, and the worker in metal, wood, or leather. Boat-building, with timber imported from India, employs about 200 carpenters: Bahrein builders can turn out an excellent forty-ton boat in less than a month. Many boats are sold to purchasers in El-Qatar and Oman.

504 Trade at the port of Manāmah was for years hindered by the unsatisfactory arrangements for handling cargo, distribution being
439 delayed, and goods left to deteriorate without any proper protection. In 1910 the control was given to a European, but in the following year native sentiment demanded native control, and two Arabs were appointed, with lamentable results. Since then matters have improved; a Hindu has been placed in charge, and the construction of a jetty and storage-shed has modified the worst of the
[651] former defects. The Sheikh is entitled by treaty to an *ad valorem* duty of 5 per cent. on merchandise. Bahrein is the principal market for the pearl-industry, the export of pearls in a good year attaining about £2,000,000. But it is also an important emporium for the east coast of Arabia, distributing merchandise from India and from countries bordering on the Persian Gulf, to El-Qatar, Qatīf, and 'Oqair, from which last two ports goods are carried into the oases of Hasa and Qatīf, and beyond into southern Nejd. This local trade is carried in native boats without manifests, so that exact statistics cannot be obtained.

439 The total average imports of Manāmah for the three years 1911–14 amounted to £2,061,038, and exports £2,106,766. During the